

VZCZCXRO0722
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHKV #2001/01 2270735
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 150735Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY KYIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3382
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KYIV 002001

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: UKRAINE: TEN YEARS AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE
NATO-UKRAINE CHARTER, INFORMATION CAMPAIGN STILL SPUTTERS

REF: 06 KIEV 3570

Classified By: Political Counselor Kent Logsdon, reason 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Ten years after the signing of the NATO-Ukraine Charter and two and a half years after the Orange Revolution, many policy makers and experts in Ukraine and in the West hoped that Ukraine would jump on a fast track to NATO membership. However, today public support for NATO membership hovers in the 20-25% range, lower than it did in 2002, at the fifth anniversary. In stark contrast, the percentage of support for NATO membership among policy elites -- academics/think tankers, journalists, government and military officials -- continues to rise, to 80% in November 2006, the last systemic polling of experts. The low level of public support can be explained by several factors: the lingering legacy of Soviet stereotypes of NATO as an aggressive military bloc; the deleterious impact of two hotly contested election cycles in 2004 and 2006 in which current PM Yanukovich and his Party of Regions abandoned their previous insider support of NATO membership for a public anti-NATO line designed to lock in support in Ukraine's east and south, where suspicions of NATO are strongest; and an anemic and poorly organized information campaign effort to explain what the new NATO is and why it is in Ukraine's national interest to join. NGOs, universities, and some provincial governments have become more active in education efforts, but overall coordination of an effective strategy, better messaging targeting specific population groups, and adequate financing remain lacking.

12. (C) Comment: The ten year anniversary of the NATO-Ukraine relationship has come and gone without much notice; a missed opportunity that fell victim to the April/May political crisis. With slow progress on the institutional reforms needed for Ukraine to meet Euro-Atlantic standards, most notably wider security sector reform, the hopes of 2005-06 for a Membership Action Plan and an invitation to membership within several years have disappeared. Given the disorganized and to date ineffective information effort, the low level of public support would have made early membership difficult in any event. Recent discussions at NATO show the onset of Ukraine fatigue among some allies, particularly the French, backed by Spain and Greece. Even though the path forward will be longer and more winding than we and the Ukrainians hoped/expected two years ago, Ukrainian inclusion in the Euro-Atlantic community remains an important element of completing the long-term vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace -- a real consideration as we prepare for the next NATO Summit in Bucharest. The U.S. also has a vested interest in the success of the information campaign because in the public mind, NATO and U.S. foreign policy are intertwined. End Summary and Comment.

Key Issues of Public Support and Government Inaction

13. (SBU) In the 1990s, there was general consensus among Ukraine's political and policy elite that its future should be European, and ultimately include membership in the European Union and NATO, although both seemed distant goals. Their aspirations were enshrined in law as the basis for Ukrainian foreign policy in 2003 under PM Yanukovich, with unanimous support from Party of Regions MPs. Through 2002, public opinion was roughly split into thirds: in favor, against, and unsure about NATO membership. The contentious election cycles of 2004 and 2006, however, broke the political elite consensus, as Yanukovich/Regions adopted an anti-NATO stance as part of an effort to lock in core voters in the South and East of Ukraine, and drove public support down to the 10-20 percent range. Embassy comment: polls depend widely on the precise wording of the question posed. End comment.

14. (SBU) With Yanukovich/Regions' return to government in August 2006 on the heels of a Universal political declaration which reaffirmed NATO membership as a strategic goal (albeit to be put to public referendum after all necessary preparations were complete), the dynamic changed. Regions adopted a more positive, though skeptical stance on membership, stressing practical cooperation and the need for an information campaign but as PM Yanukovich's key September 14 speech at NATO underscored (reftel), not a request for a MAP as Yushchenko had expected. Following Yanukovich's positive words on an information campaign, close Yanukovich ally Eduard Prutnik, the new State and Radio TV Chair, pledged to the Political Committee on Thanksgiving that the Yanukovich government would set aside 10 million hryvnia (\$2 million) in the 2007 budget.

KYIV 00002001 002 OF 003

15. (C) The situation on the ground back in Kyiv did not back up Yanukovich and Prutnik's positive words. The Regions drafted 2007 budget, in the hands of DPM/Finance Minister Azarov, slashed the information budget for 2007 to 5 million hryvnia, of which 4 million hryvnia was earmarked for EU information efforts and only 1 million for NATO. The Government also removed the authority for administering this budget from two pro-NATO institutions - the MFA and the Center for Euro-Atlantic Integration, headed by Volodymyr Horbulin - and handed it to the Education Ministry under a NATO-skeptic Socialist Minister Nikolayenko answerable to a NATO-hostile DPM, Dmytro Tabachnyk.

16. C) In December, Prutnik's Committee spent 4 million hryvnia (\$800,000), of the 2006 budget his predecessor had refused to spend, on a single seminar which had nothing to do with security issues and at which NATO was not mentioned once. In March 2007, Nikolayenko's Education Ministry rushed through a nontransparent tender process with little notice for the 3.416 ml hryvnia (\$680,000) at its disposal; it remains unclear as to who won or what happened. It was particularly strange that the Government could not find ways to support NATO information campaigns in the country while grassroots organizations with very small budgets were finding ways to get the word out. For example, the Association of School Principals, on its own and in cooperation with a Polish NGO, initiated an innovative nationwide competition for school kids to write essays on the meaning of NATO for Ukrainian security.

17. (SBU) At present, the GOU continues to talk about the information campaign, prepares and publishes plans of activities, but financial constraints remain. Extensive documents promise coverage of joint NATO-Ukraine operations, appearances on talk shows and press conferences by state officials to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of membership, training for journalists and contests for best NATO-related coverage, military and NGO exchanges with NATO countries, and a strong focus on the younger generation. However, there is little emphasis on the southern and eastern

parts of the country, where the information is needed most, and the programs that are implemented, do not necessarily reach their intended audiences (such as the "NATO: Friend or Alien?" documentary that aired at 1AM).

NGO Efforts Well-Meaning, but Disorganized

¶8. (SBU) By early 2007, civil society activists on NATO issues had concluded that, for now, they would have to press forward on information efforts without notable government support. Most activists also had reached consensus that the time of seminars in Kyiv for policy experts had passed (preaching to the converted), and that efforts needed to be refocused on reforging political elite consensus and on a more effective outreach campaign outside Kyiv to the general populace. In the absence of a central government coordinator and financing, however, the effort lacks a defined "center of gravity." The well-intentioned Ukraine-NATO Civic League, a loose affiliation of more than 50 NGOs nationwide, has little/no resources and largely lacks any strategic campaign/marketing planning capacity, outside of Democratic Initiatives' Ilko Kucheriv (one of the country's leading political sociologists).

¶9. (C) The first activist to try to provide such a focus for efforts was Presidential adviser Oleh Rybachuk, DPM for Euro-Atlantic integration issues in the first post-Orange Revolution government and Yushchenko's chief-of-staff during the second. Rybachuk aimed to engage Ukrainian oligarchs of all political colors to finance a combined European and Euro-Atlantic future campaign, featuring notable pop stars and policy heavyweights and media coverage to get the word out. Rybachuk launched his effort at a March 2, 2007 seminar most notable for the clear consensus on the European future and negotiating with the EU as opposed to pursuing the all but dead Single Economic Space project. There was little discussion of the differences of opinion on timing and tactics for NATO, particularly the wisdom of entering a MAP or holding a referendum. When the political crisis began several weeks later, Rybachuk all but disappeared from the scene with no follow-up, in what domestic and international friends critically characterized as "typical Oleh."

¶10. (C) The latest pretender is pop star/Our Ukraine MP Ruslana (Lyzhychko), who has engaged US policymakers in Washington and in Kyiv with increasing regularity in 2007 on the NATO issue, and who attended a specialized seminar at the Marshall Center in Garmisch in May (along with young BYuT MP Andriy Shevchenko) to try to bolster her ability to speak

KYIV 00002001 003 OF 003

more credibly on NATO related issues. Although she recently decided to give up her Rada seat to pursue her music career, she intends to remain active in Ukraine's political scene. Ruslana wants to form a working group of primarily Ukrainian activists/experts, but drawing on international experience, with a heavier focus on sociologists and marketing professionals to design a campaign that uses tested messages on segments of the population, resamples opinion, and readjusts messages and marketing techniques - essentially treating NATO as a brand in the Ukrainian marketplace. This approach tracks the more sustained and professional efforts in the Baltics and central Europe in trying to engage a skeptical population. Even if an effective working group can be formed, an effective information campaign would still face the challenge of financing, as well as successfully convincing a more complex and difficult market audience than existed in any previous aspirant country.

Marking Ten Years of NATO-Ukraine

¶11. (C) NATO membership advocates in the GOU were disappointed that the ten year anniversary of the NATO-Ukraine partnership was by and large overshadowed by the

April/May political crisis and months of political stalemate.

After succeeding in delivering a President and Prime Minister endorsed invitation to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) for a July visit to Kyiv, the pro-Euro integration cadre was crestfallen when the NAC balked for fear of contributing to the turmoil. NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer also kept a distance, but did participate in an anniversary video teleconference that included GOU officials and national media.

¶12. (SBU) An event that did attract media attention was a Kyiv - Washington video teleconference co-sponsored by the Atlantic Council and the Democratic Initiatives Fund, with Embassy support. The DVC included Ambassador Taylor, First Deputy Foreign Minister Ohryzko, MP Ruslana, and Slovak Ambassador Rusnak in Kyiv and EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary of State David Kramer and Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.S. Shamsur in DC. Three messages emerged from the well-attended discussion: first, NATO and Ukraine continue to work well together in practical terms; second, statistics show that public support for Ukraine's NATO membership aspirations increases as people receive more information; and third, the Ukrainian government must make the case to its citizens. On the last point, U.S. officials agreed that NATO Allies can provide support, but the effort can only succeed if the GOU owns the information campaign and makes a tangible effort.

¶13. (U) Visit Embassy Kyiv's classified website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev.
Pettit